

MEXICO MUST SOLVE LABOR PROBLEM NOW

Foreign Agitators Creating Unrest Among the Ranks of the Working People.

STRIKES ARE COMMON

President Obregon Hopes to Remedy Trouble by Passing Labor Law and Other Methods.

By RALPH H. TURNER
(United Press Staff Correspondent.)
WASHINGTON, Dec. 24.—When General Alvaro Obregon finished with his inauguration as president of Mexico the other day and took over his desk in the national palace, his first remark to the newly appointed cabinet was probably something like this:

"Now then, gentlemen, let's get to work on this labor situation!"

Obregon may not have used just those words, but he realizes with all certainty that Mexico's industrial situation represents the most critical internal problem that the country faces today. Obregon's friends declare that had he been able to occupy the presidential chair directly following the overthrow of Carranza, Mexico would have escaped the delicate state of affairs that has been created by the Mexican working man, with the aid of the foreign agitator. Obregon bears the reputation of being a strong man, quick of decision and aggressive when he begins to act.

It was necessary, however, to choose a president ad interim. That job fell to Adolfo de la Huerta, a thoroughly likeable, pleasant sort of person, but sometimes passive, always conciliatory and—according to the employer's side of it—too much of a "liberal" himself to deal successfully with labor problems. It was difficult, too, for a provisional government to adopt measures of a lasting nature.

As a result, the Mexican laborer's state of mind has developed in less than six months from placid satisfaction or mild discontent to a condition of nationwide demand for higher wages and shorter hours, with a determination to achieve this aim, whatever the cost may be. And on several occasions, in different parts of the country, his efforts have assumed a radical character wherein labor demonstrations have been punctuated by cries of "Viva la Soviet!" "Viva Russia!" or other slogans pertaining to bolshevism or "the triumph of the proletariat." It is that phase of the Mexican labor situation that is creating uneasiness today and will demand the full attention of the new president, Obregon.

POORLY PAID WORKERS

It is not the purpose, here, to dwell on the justice or injustice of the Mexican laborer's cause. For years, undoubtedly, he was one of the poorest paid workers in the world. Also, his standard of living was one of the lowest in the world and it took little to satisfy his wants. But today, the Mexican day laborer, who a year ago probably was receiving two pesos (\$1) daily, is demanding four or five pesos. The increases asked are greater, of course, as the skill of the particular job is enhanced.

In the past three months strikes have been almost perpetual. They have occurred in every part of the country, from the Texas border to the state of Yucatan. They have included the coal miners in the state of Coahuila, the textile workers in the state of Puebla and in the vicinity of Mexico City, the railway shopmen, employees of the oil companies at Tampico, the stevedores at Vera Cruz and scores of other occupations. Strikes frequently have been averted, as in the case of the tramway employees of Mexico City, by the employers according to the demands rather than suspend operation.

Through all of these movements a group of radical agitators has worked unceasingly to promote the unrest and profit by it in the interest of bolshevism than they do about the Einstein theory. Many of these radical leaders are foreigners—Americans, Russians or Spaniards—who attempt to direct the movement, publish "red" literature and call meetings which discuss the grievances of the Mexican worker and the principles of communism in the same breath. Communist magazines are published and there has been formed the "Communist Federation of the Mexican Proletariat," which represents the extreme left of Mexican labor. Thus, a situation has been created similar to that which our own Samuel Gompers experienced—namely, a struggle for the upper hand between the conservative and radical labor elements. Thus far, the Mexican Federation of Labor, which is designed to maintain parallel lines with the American Federation of Labor and of which the Communist Federation is an offshoot, has retained the majority.

The communist element, at a meeting which the writer attended, attempted recently to call a general strike in Mexico City. There were ample "vivas" for Trotsky and Lenin but the strength of the "reds" was not sufficient to swing the strike.

FRENCH INDUSTRIAL ROOM

Obregon has two principle remedies for the present critical situation. He believes, first, that one of the difficulties is the lack of an adequate labor law and one of his first acts as president will be to introduce a bill before Congress setting forth the "privileges and the duties" of both capital and labor. Secondly, he considers that the industrial development

of Mexico, which he predicts will be tremendous now that peace is established, will create such a demand for labor that the situation will automatically adjust itself. The latter belief is good logic, but Obregon may, or may not, realize that the launching of this industrial boom depends, largely, upon Mexico settling the outstanding issues with foreign governments, especially the United States, and obtaining the recognition of the United States for the new Mexican administration.

Mexico's industries and resources cannot be developed without foreign capital. And foreign capital is not likely to enter Mexico in any appreciable sums until foreign governments recognize Mexico's stability, or in some way define their attitude toward the new Mexican regime.

FRANK KING TO VISIT HERE

Is Now Associated Press Staff Correspondent in London.

Frank King, Associated Press staff correspondent in London, a graduate of the University of Missouri, will be in Columbia next spring. A letter received a few days ago by his father, H. H. King, county school attendance officer, said that Frank would come early in the spring, probably in March. How long he will stay is not stated.

King, as an Associated Press correspondent, made a trip through Siberia before taking his present position.

\$3,537,380.00 IS SPENT ON SHIPS

Production on June 30 This Year Was 93.3 Per Cent Complete.

By United Press.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24.—The program of the United States Shipping Board, which calls for 2,315 ships of 13,675,711 deadweight tons, is nearing completion. On June 30, 1920, production was 93.3 per cent complete. The production of 1919, which put into operation over six million tons of ships, was the largest in the history of any nation. These figures are given in the annual report of the United States Shipping Board, made public recently.

This gigantic program will be more readily understood from the following propositions:

If all vessels on the program were placed in a straight line, stem to stern, they would extend for a distance of 158 miles, and if steaming a mile and a quarter apart would reach from New York to Southampton, England.

The total deadweight tonnage is equal to the carrying capacity of 389,363 freight cars loaded 35 tons to the car.

A total of 4,593,000 horsepower is generated by the propelling machinery.

For the transportation of the hull steel alone, 115,000 flat cars would be required.

For manufacturing the rivets used, a rod of steel three-fourths of an inch in diameter and 37,500 miles long would be necessary. This rod would extend around the earth at the equator and sufficient would remain to make a three-strand fence from New York to San Francisco.

Besides this shipping program the Emergency Fleet Corporation planned and put into execution ten steel-ship construction yards, seven wooden-ship yards and four concrete-ship yards.

This corporation let contracts for thirteen marine railways, eleven of which are completed, seventeen dry docks, sixteen of which will soon be in operation and two graving docks. The money expended on this gigantic program to June 30, 1920, has been \$3,537,380,726.94.

The board was first organized in 1916. "Its purpose is to establish a permanent American marine ultimately resting on private enterprise," the report says.

"During September, 1919, the Division of Construction delivered 150 ships of over 3,000 deadweight tons, which represented a total of 810,386 tons. The output for the month of September, 1919, has greatly exceeded pre-war deliveries for an entire year.

"Our merchant marine has been placed on fifty foreign trade routes. On June 30, 1920, there had been established 309 general cargo berths, of which 202 are between the United States and foreign ports. These various berths afford the shipper 229 services. Many of them are making voyages to ports of the world where ships under the American flag were seldom seen before."

Missionary Society Elects.

The Young Peoples Missionary Society of the Broadway Methodist Church met at the home of Miss Ruth Rusk on Virginia avenue Wednesday. The following officers were elected for the coming year: President, Benice Irving; vice-president, Hettie Clements; secretary, Anita Moore; treasurer, Ruth Rusk; superintendent of mission study and publicity, Frances Grinstead; superintendent of supplies, Ruth Carrier.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

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Christmas Tree Harvest Begins Back in October in Vermont

Since five million Christmas trees are annually shipped out of Vermont, it is only natural to wonder where they all come from. They must come from farms—not farms operated to produce the Christmas tree crop, but abandoned farms where the trees have planted and reared themselves.

These abandoned farms lie in high valleys in the foothills of the Green Mountains. One may see sections covered by thirty-year-old firs, once thriving settlements, but now all but two or three may be unoccupied. Such land, once under the plow, is gradually coming back to forest. Along the fern-choked, faintly traced furrows, young spruces come up and in the open sunshine take on a vivid green. And more than that—the symmetrical branches are a lively green clear to the ground.

Christmas trees cannot be cut in areas of spruce forest, because when they grow in dense clusters the under branches die for want of light, and hence the trees have no value as decorative Christmas trees.

Few, indeed, see the harvest. One or two lonely partridge hunters, perhaps, will see it as it lies covered with the first early snow squalls in the mountains. But back in October, when the days have not lost all of the mellowness of autumn, a gang of twenty choppers will have been busily at work cutting the scattering young spruces and tying

them with twine into bunches of from two to six, according to size.

The cutting and bundling is the easiest part of the harvest, for the trees must be hauled for miles to the railroad, and at this time of the year the mountain roads are nothing more than frozen ruts and waterholes. Despite this fact, however, heavy 2-horse wagons and even motor trucks, bristling with great crible bodies, struggle slowly out, loaded high with the trees. Two horses are able to draw out at a load about seventy trees of average size.

At the chosen town on the railroad every disused spot is hired and a mountain of trees begins to grow, till eight thousand of them may be packed in a solid mass. At once the loading on flat cars begins. As the great piles are opened up and laid between the tall uprights along the sides of cars, the fragrance the sun distills from the spruce fills the air. It is a delightful place to be, for the sun's rays, slanting among the bundles, brings out all the vivid colors of the emerald till the place seems bathed in translucent light all its own.

Among the measures that the women will support at the coming session of the General Assembly are: The establishment of a minimum wage commission with women represented on it; a revision of the factory inspection law, abolishing the fee basis for factory inspection, making it mandatory that at least two women be inspectors and that inspection be statewide; the unpassed bills of the children's code; a revision of the primary, registration, and election laws; the elimination of the word "male" from the state constitution; a law making women eligible to be elected delegates to the constitutional convention; adequate appropriation for the state board of health.

Former Columbia Woman to Serve on Two Committees.

Mrs. Walter McNab Miller, formerly of Columbia, has been selected a member of the steering committee of the Missouri Woman's Legislative Committee. The legislative committee was formed in St. Louis recently at a meeting of representatives of nine women's organizations in the state. In addition to the steering committee Mrs. Miller will also serve on the publicity committee.

Will Watch Legislation

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COME IN AND ASK ABOUT IT

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Seal Sale Expected to Average 10c.

An average of ten cents invested in tuberculosis Christmas Seals by every man, woman and child in Missouri this month will double the effectiveness of the fight being made to eliminate this disease and save hundreds of lives, according to Dr. Walter McNab Miller, executive secretary of the Missouri Tuberculosis Association. The seals, health bonds and Christmas seal fund certificates are on sale during the holidays. The entire proceeds of the sale in this state, except a small percentage sent the National Tuberculosis Association to cover costs of supplies and administration, will be expended in extending the prevention and educational work carried on by the Missouri Tuberculosis Association.

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